Word With Non—Believers In The Vedic Revelation

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A WORD WITH NON-BELIEVERS IN THE VEDIC REVELATION.

by Chajju Singh Lahore 18

The *Fortnightly Review* for January, 1887, contains two important papers on a subject of the highest moment, from the pens of men of varied information and eminent abilities. The articles which appear under the common heading of "New Reformation," possess a peculiar interest for the student of theology and for every person who cares for the welfare of his soul. The 1st of these comes from the pen of Revd. Voysey, a well-known theist, and deals with the fundamental dogmas of Christianity, showing how every one of them, without a single exception, ought to be rejected on moral grounds alone, and substituted by doctrines more in consonance with the dictates of reason and conscience; the 2nd, the product of the Bishop of Clifton's pen, brings forward objections and difficulties consequent on the rejection of a revelation, and points out the futility of efforts to construct a religion on frail and erring human reason and the "inward promptings of conscience and heart." The former denies the infallibility of the Bible by showing that it contains side by side "lovely and imperishable truths" with *ghastly and impious errors;*" the latter defends it as the Word of God by appealing to History, frankly acknowledging, at the same time, that Christianity inculcates doctrines, which, though indefensible by reason, are, in reality, mysteries, which cannot be fathomed and understood by man. We

propose to examine in these columns,* briefly, these interesting papers, and we shall take the Bishop's first, because that appears to us to be the most valuable of the two, since it raises some difficulties which are as much beyond the power of Christianity or any other so-called revelation to solve, as they are beyond that of non-believers in Revelation.

The Bishop thus summarises Revd. Voysey's opinion of Christianity and of the religion that ought to be :—

The writer rejects all or nearly all Christian dogmas as being immoral ; he throws off the tyranny of an infallible book ; he denies the divinity of Christ, and rejects his authority both as to matters of belief and as an infallible example and rule of conduct. He gives a brief exposition of the religious beliefs he still holds, and concludes with an expression of hope that new reformation may come quickly. "Our return to common sense in our religion cannot be too soon."

As regards our theist's criticism on the dogmas of Christianity, the Bishop says :—

"The objections raised by the writer against the dogmas of Christianity are nowise new. The difficulties which he enumerates as arising out of the acceptance of these dogmas are as old as Christianity itself ; believers in Christianity have never sought to deny their existence, nor have they ever pretended that reason could solve them. On the contrary they have ever held that the Christian doctrines contained mysteries insoluble by human reason. The knowledge of these facts, however, has not prevented thousands and thousands of learned and honest

* This pamphlet is a reprint of the articles which appeared in the *Arya Patrika* under the title which the pamphlet bears.

and truth-loving men in all ages from embracing Christianity and heartily adhering to it. To them it has not seemed difficult to combine the acceptance of these mysteries with a firm belief in the truth of the Christian religion."

It may here be observed that this is the way in which Christians invariably defend their scriptures when the truth of any of the doctrines contained therein is called in question. Mystery is a word which is sufficiently elastic in signification to shelter any dogma or doctrine, however absurd and unreasonable it may be. To show that it is the invariable practice of believers in Christianity to excuse its errors by appealing to the fact of its having been believed in by the "wisest and the best" in all ages, we quote a passage from the April number of the *Edinburgh Review*, 1863. The writer, after acknowledging that a "revelation" may not have one and only one reading, there being as many as 30,000 various readings of the Bible; that it may contain self-inconsistencies and self-contradictions, the Bible being inconsistent and self-contradictory in many places; that it may not be in harmony with the discoveries and truths of science, the teachings of the Bible being far from possessing scientific accuracy; that it may not indicate *literary genuineness*, the Pentateuch, though attributed to Moses, containing "an account of his own death and an allusion to the kings of Israel," says :—

"First that this Book, with its singular and complex contents, has commanded the earnest attention and devoted veneration of the *best*, the *most earnest*, the most *devoted* men of every successive generation for 1,800 years. It was despised by an

impure-minded Gibbon, a vain and licentious Voltaire, a coarse and blasphemous Tom Paine. It has been treasured and consulted as the very *word* of God Himself by countless men of pure and noble lives in Church and State, in public and private life, of every shade of opinion and every type of mind."

(The italics are ours.)

This is not a good defence. The Bible has been a fruitful source of blood-shed, torture and suffering to mankind in the palmy days of its power. An American orator thus describes the glories of Christianity when Christianity was in the ascendant :—

Christianity, for a thousand years, taught memory to forget and reason to believe. Not one step was taken in advance. Over the manuscripts of philosophers and poets, priests with their ignorant tongues thrust out, devoutly scrolled the forgeries of faith. For a thousand years the torch of progress was extinguished in the blood of Christ, and his disciples, moved by ignorant zeal, by insane, cruel creeds, destroyed with flame and sword a hundred millions of their fellowmen. They made this world a hell.

Even leaving out of consideration the stern historical facts which entirely destroy the force of the fulsome eulogies which the Christians lavish upon the Bible, the fact of its having been believed in by many wise and good men, for it is ridiculous to say that *all* good and wise men have believed in it, may be easily accounted for. The mind of man, in its healthy state, is ever thirsting after a knowledge of the relations which subsist between the Supreme Being and the soul. Any doctrines or dogmas which pretend to throw any light on this subject cannot fail to arrest

the attention of man. The Bible is the only religious book, which declaring itself, in the most positive and emphatic terms, to be the Word of God, ever found access to Europe; and as it came into a prominent notice when darkness was brooding over the whole of Europe, when the mind of the half-barbarous European was naturally too fond of the marvellous and too weak and timid to treat lightly what announced itself to have emanated from the Divine Mind, it found believers by thousands and millions, and, by virtue of its early reception, has continued to mould and regulate the religious views of an overwhelming majority of the European population up to the present time. Many men of intelligence and culture have undoubtedly believed in it sincerely, but that does not prove that the doctrines of the book are infallible and above question. The Bishop, too, says the same thing:—

"This is not indeed a proof (the fact of many wise men having believed in the Bible in all ages *i.e.*, during these 18 centuries,) that they were right, but the united testimony of so large and important a body of men in a matter of such practical importance, well acquained as they were with the force of the proposed difficulties, may be thought to carry some weight, when there is a question of deciding what common sense requires in matters of religious belief."

No body will have the hardihood to deny that there are many religious and moral truths interspersed in the pages of the Bible, but that gives no right to its advocates to set it down as the Word of God. If its teachings fail to

satisfy the yearning of the soul after a knowledge of the Supreme Being and of the relations in which he stands to His creatures, if its doctrines and dogmas appear revolting to common sense and experience, the impartial inquirer after truth is perfectly excusable in throwing off its yoke as the embodiment of the will of God and in seeking for light elsewhere. He certainly ought to pause before he discards it altogether, for it has commanded, and still continues to command, the attention and veneration of many a gifted intellect. This fact he will, by no means, lose sight of when about to break away from a faith which has the adherence of so many men of learning and erudition to boast of. He cannot, however, pause for ever, he cannot accept the example of others as his *infallible* guide. If he finds defects and short-comings in the Bible, if he cannot, in good faith, bring himself to ascribe it to the Source of all wisdom and intelligence, why, he has every right, nay he is bound, to attend to the dictates of his reason and conscience and look elsewhere for what the Bible cannot give him. If the doctrines of the Bible are opposed to reason and sense, however sincerely they may have been believed in by good and sensible men in the past, and be firmly believed in even at present by some, of whom the world may justly be proud, they ought to be at once renounced and replaced by better ones.

The Bishop proceeds :—

" When we turn to the New Reformation plan, the new form of religion that has to supersede Christianity, we find that its exponent does not propose to base it, any more than Chaistianity, on physical proofs,

but on the inward prmptings of his own conscience and heart. So that we are thrown back on human testimony after all, only instead of having a "crowd of witnesses" over our heads, we are reduced to the views and experiences of an individual, and that too of one who informs us that he formerly entertained religious convictions of a very different kind. I offer this observation not as a proof that the newly proposed religion is false, but because its author appeals to us to return to common sense in our religion, and it can scarcely be said that under these circumstances the New Reformation presents itself to us as a work of common sense."

The newly proposed religion cannot but result in a thousand absurdities, as absurd as any which disfigure the pages of the Bible or the Puranas. It is impossible for human reason to formulate a system of religion with any approach to perfection. The nature and character of the Supreme Being, of the soul, and of the relations which subsist between them, are absolutely beyond the power of human reason to realize or understand without direct Revelation from God. These are not things which are capable of physical demonstration. They are problems impossible of solution but by the assistance of the Revelation which the Supreme Being givés to man in the beginning of every creation. It is possible that the unaided intellect of man may get together a few moral and religious truths and boast that it has discovered them unaided, but even they are to be traced to the remote agency of God's Revelation, as we shall show further on. But the fact, that the efforts of those who discard Revelation, to frame anything like a perfect system of religion end in a dis-

astrous failure, is fully proved by experience. Several sects disregarding Revelation have sprung up in our own country from time to time during the present century, but their attempts to do without Revelation have been a fruitful source of errors and absurdities. Instead of discovering any truths in *reality*, they have each propounded and tenaciously adhered to a number of dogmas which are utterly indefensible by reason and common sense, and the result has been that they have introduced in their several systems of faith ten absurdities for every absurdity they have discarded, thus making the confusion worse confounded. They, however, strenuously maintain that their beliefs are in consonance with common sense and experience. What is still more extraordinary is that each of the sects, though considerably differing in cardinal points of faith from its other sisters, is inseperably wedded to the same opinion—that its principles are approved by experience and common sense. Now who is to decide as to which of these jarring *common senses* and *conflicting experiences* is in the right? The truth is that common sense cannot unravel the mysteries which require *Revelation* to be solved. It is a vain and empty boast to say that common sense can ever give us a good religion. The learned Bishop is right in questioning the powers of common sense. He would not be far from the truth if he denied the possibility of the newly proposed religion ever making even a distant approach to truth.

One of the most deplorable effects which follow the rejection of Revelation is that it destroys

all community of thought and feeling. There is no one particular code of religious and moral law invested with the authority of a Divine origin to be observed in our conduct and dealings in life. Every discarder of Revelation sets his fancy to work to strike out a new path for himself, and is best pleased when removed farthest from others. Communion with God becomes the easiest thing. Each talks to Him at his pleasure and astonishes mankind with his revelations. These revelations, however questionable, are defended with becoming heat, and divine origin is warmly claimed for them. It matters little whether the revelations of one man are or are not in accord with those of the other. The world must believe that both the sets, however antagonistic and contradictory to each other, are reflex of the Divine Mind. The author of one set is as serious and as positively certain of the truth of his set as the author of the other. The former, however, is not, in the least, prepared to concede that the revelations of the latter are true, while the latter regards with inexpressible contempt the pretensions of his rival. But each is, in his own estimation, Divinely-inspired and as such will not retract an iota of what he is pleased to speak. The bond of unity and sympathy is thus utterly gone, and the community becomes split up into inspired individuals, each of them at war with the other. The Bishop very rightly observes:—

"All external authority being thus set aside (by the rejection of Revelation), private judgment of the individual becomes the sole authority charged with determining what is right or wrong, true or false. As physical demonstration of religious truth is by the nature of things impossible, and as men are far from

taking uniform views on many important points of religion and morality, all unity of religion under this system becomes practically impossible. The new reformation instead of uniting men in religious matters, can only result in still greater divisions than those which exist already, a circumstance which common sense would scarcely regard as indicative of truth. It may be thought that reason and conscience may exercise a combining force sufficient to induce men to adopt unity of belief. Experience shows the fallacy of such hope.

An illustration of the sentiments expressed in the above may be found in the history and development of what is termed the "Brahmo Samaj."

After expressing his regret that Mr. Voysey should have spoken of Christ in somewhat disrespectful terms (according to the Bishop's standard of judgment, of course), the Bishop goes on :—

We are asked to look at religion by the light of common sense. In attempting to do so, I need not here enter upon an examination of the proofs that there is a God, that He is just and good, that He is the creator of the world and of man, that man has a conscience, which implies the existence of a moral law, and that God in some way or other communicates with his creatures. So much is admitted by our writer, and I therefore take it for granted. Religion treats of the relations between God and man. To be real it must be practical, it must deal with things as they are. A scheme of religion, however artfully constructed, however pleasing to the imagination, if it fails to recognize the realities of man's position, is altogether worthless; it is no better than a dream. Now the man who believes in God, creator of all things, the moment he turns his mind to consider the

relations between the creator and His creatures, finds himself surrounded by impenetrable mystery. There are many things he understands and which fill him with admiration of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God, but there are many others which utterly surpass his comprehension. The fact of creation is in itself a mystery. How could God bring things out of nothing ? How can we understand his having existed from all eternity, without creatures of any kind and without need of any, and then having of a sudden brought numberless beings into existence in whose welfare he is deeply interested, yet without having thereby added to his own happines, which was perfect from all eternity. We can not explain the fact, our minds fail to grasp it ; yet this is one of many mysteries we are forced to admit if we acknowledge the existence of God. creator of heaven and earth."

Without minding what the convictions of Mr. Voysey are and on what grounds they are based, we may say that the remark of the Bishop, that a scheme of religion which fails to recognize the "realities of man's position" is altogether worthless, is true, if it means that no religious system, which does not give man the truest conceptions of the nature and character of the Supreme Being and of the soul, as well as of their mutual relations—conceptions which accord with the conclusions of the most gifted intellects as far as they can think and understand ; which does not inculcate the highest type of virtue and morality ; which does not lay down the clearest outlines of duty and so on, can ever be worth man's acceptation. The general tendency of human nature is in the direction of evil, it is being constantly betrayed into acts of injustice and immorality, of cruelty and oppression into viola-

tions of duty and into a thousand other phases of evil; and a religion that can effectually check the evil impulses of the mind, prevent its energies from spending themselves on corruption and divert them into a healthy course by force of its moral truths—by a true representation of the nature and character of God, as, for instance, that He is just, punishing and rewarding every one according to his deserts, that He is omnipresent, and, therefore, privy to our most secret thoughts, that He is unchangeable and so forth, that religion is a religion which may indeed be characterised as recognizing the realities of man's actual position. If, however, by a scheme of religion recognizing the realities of man's actual position, be meant a religion which promises indulgences to man; which holds out hopes of remission and forgiveness of sins, merely because man has an aversion to the councils of virtue; which teaches that God can act against His own nature; which teaches that intercession or mediation of a human being can stand in good stead to man if timely appealed to; which teaches that God can incarnate himself; which teaches that soul is a creation which may lapse into nothing at any time, such a scheme of faith certainly does not recognize the realities of man's actual position, for it cannot elevate and exalt humanity morally, and, being opposed to reason and common-sense, must sooner or later be discarded. The Christian religion, for one, does not recognize the realities of man's actual position, a fact which is too patent to need illustration.

There is no doubt that the man who discards Revelation and trusts to his frail reason to tell

him what the Supreme Being is, what His attributes and qualities are, what the soul is, and how it stands to the Supreme Being, must find himself "surrounded by impenetrable mystery." when he turns his mind to consider the relations which exist between the Creator and His creatures; but to a believer in the true Revelation everything is clear. The fact of creation is no mystery to him. He knows that God has not produced things out of *nothing*. He knows that something cannot be produced out of nothing. He knows that the material cause of the universe as well as the intelligent existence which displays its powers and activities in various forms of matter fashioned by the hand of the Maker as His wisdom and His justice thought fit, is coeternal with the Supreme Being, that both *prakriti* and soul are indestructible and imperishable like their Master. How does he know all this? Because it is written in the Vedas, the true Revelation :—

Dwá suparná sayujá sakháyá samánang brikhshang parishswajáte. Tayoraniah pippalang swadwatti nashnan nanyo abhi chákshiti, which means :—"(*Dwá*) both the Supreme Being and the soul; (*suparná*) both intelligent existences and supporters (the one supporting the whole creation, the other its own dependents); (*sayujá*) the one "pervader" and the other, "pervaded"; (*sakháyá*) united in bonds of eternal friendship, are eternal; (*samánang*) similarly; (*brikhshang*) the material cause of the universe; (*ajáte*) is uncreated or eternal; (*Tayoraniah*) one of these two intelligent existences (the soul) enjoys the reward of its merits and demerits in the

material world, while the other (the Supreme Being); (*nashnananyo*) does not enjoy but pervades the external and internal parts of the whole universe." The Upnishads which explain and elucidate the doctrines of the Vedas, also declare the same thing, *e. g.*—*Ajá me káng lohit shukl krishnáng bahvíh prajah sirijmánang sarúpah. Ajohayeko jushmáno nushete jahátyenáng bhugat bhogam jonyah.* It means:—"God matter and human souls, these are the three eternal substances, ever uncreated. The eternal human souls enjoy the eternal matter, while involved in material existences; the third eternal substance, God, exists for ever, He is neither involved in material existences nor enjoys the material world" Thus we have the testimony of the Supreme Being Himself that He never created things out of nothing, but out of something which has been existing from all eternity, something which has been existing and shall exist for ever. And when we turn to the world for a proof of what we find in Revelation, we find the same law illustrated in the constitution of Nature. We never see anything produced out of *nothing* in the world. The production of something always presupposes the existence of other something or somethings. There must be bricks and mortar and sundry other materials before a house can be built; the masons cannot conjure it out of nothing. There must be flour, which again presupposes the existence of grain, to prepare a loaf of bread from. Sugar presupposes the existence of the sugarcane or some other product of the soil containing all the properties

of sugar. Not a single thing can be got out of nothing. To a believer in the Vedic Revelation, it will be evident, there is nothing of mystery in regard to creation. He knows that God has *made* the world and not *created* it, because God Himself so declares, and so does the work of His hand, the material universe.

He is also clear as to how God has existed from eternity. He knows that this is not the first time that the world has been created. * He knows that it has been coming into existence and then relapsing into its original chaotic state from eternity. He knows that God is eternal, and that His attributes, too, are eternal. His attributes of *creation* and *destruction* must, therefore, be eternal, which leads to the conclusion that He has been creating and destroying the world from eternity. How does he know all this? Because the Vedic Revelation declares:—*Om ritancha satayancha bhídhát tapso dhajáyat. tatorátri jáyat sumudro aranwa. Samudrá daranwá dadhi sambatsaro ajáyat. Aho rátráni vid dhwdi vishvasya mishto vashi. Súrya chandar masau dhátá yathâ purvmakalpiyat. Divancha prithvínchántriksha matho swah,* which means:—

" *Prakriti* (the equipoise of the three *Gunas*—Satwa, Rajas, and Tamas,) the material cause of the Universe, was made visible by the unlimited power of God. It assumed a nubilous form, after which water and dry land appeared. After the waters, time (the annual motion of the earth) was fixed. Days and nights (caused by the diurnal motion of the earth) were made by Him who controls the Universe. The sun, moon, light and

* "Created" is here used in the sense of "made." C. S.

earth, as well as space and bodies moving in space, were made just as they had been made in the previous *Kalpas* by God, the Feeder and Sustainer of all."

It is plain from the *Mantra* that it is not the first time that the world has come into existence, it has been created and destroyed an indefinite number of times ere this and will be created and destroyed through all eternity. The Supreme Being, as the Bishop says, is "All-happiness", nothing can add to or detract from that "Happiness". He is neither pleased by creating the world nor grieved by destroying it. It is His nature to create and to destroy, just as it is the nature of fire to feel warm. Just as fire cannot but feel warm, in the same way the Supreme Being cannot but create and destroy. His justice and mercy also must have their exercise. They cannot be exercised without sentient beings to exercise upon. There must be sentient, free agents to be dealt with and sentient free agents to receive His countless blessings and enjoy His innumerable bounties according to their merits and demerits. The Supreme Being, therefore, creates and destroys the world, not because it enhances or lessens His happiness, but entirely according to the requirements of His eternal attributes of creation, destruction, justice, mercy and so on. It does not cost Him any special effort to create or to destroy, for He is uniform and unchangeable. The fire feels warm or the eye sees by virtue of the properties or powers which are inherent in them, and which are independent of all effort to manifest themselves; so does the Supreme Being create and destroy in accordance

with His attributes, which are eternal and ever active. It is evident from the foregoing remarks that to a believer in the true Revelation is clear and plain all that appears so puzzling and ununderstandable to non-believers in Revelation or to believers in false revelations.

Further on the Bishop observes :—

"Nor are the mysteries in nature confined to the physical order alone. Difficulties quite as great, quite as inexplicable, meet us in the moral order. Take the existence of pain and suffering which is one of the consequences of creation. Look at the wild beasts of the earth: carnivorous animals cannot exist without causing pain and death to others. They cannot help it—it is a necessity of their existence; their members are framed for the purpose, and if they fail to cause pain and death to others, they are doomed to die themselves. What a mystery is here! Why did their Creator so fashion them? How is this to be reconciled with the belief that God is good*, and that He loves all His creatures? We cannot deny the facts; we doubt not that God is good, yet we cannot explain the connection between the two; it is a mystery, and as such we accept it. The mystery is still greater in the case of man. How frequent are the cases of children, without any fault of theirs, born of viciuos parents, reared in vice, brought up in dens of iniquity, removed from all good influences, taught to regard sin as their means of livelihood, and so carrying out a wretched existence in sin, poverty, and disease, till death comes as a relief; whilst others abound with good things and have every opportunity of instruction, of practising virtue, and of improving their faculties both of mind and body? How are such things to be explained? How are they to be reconciled with the justice of God and His love for His children?

* As Mr. Voysey says He is. C. S.

That they are compatible every believer in God must admit, yet he cannot explain how. The existence of evil is one of the greatest, perhaps the greatest of difficulties which presents itself to the human mind, when contemplating the work of an all-wise and beneficent Creator. The atheist escapes the difficulty by denying the existence of God. He only involves himself in other difficulties and contradictions from which reason recoils, and he ends in universal scepticism. But the man who believes in God, while he is forced by his reason to acknowledge that God is just and wise and good, is unable either to deny these facts or to explain them."

The non-believers in the Vedic Revelation may well be in a fix as to how to account for the existence of pain and suffering in the world. To explain it away is no light task. Neither the Revelation-discarding vain theist nor a believer in a false revelation can adduce any valid reason justifying the existence of what they term "evil" in the government of a good and beneficent Creator. The problem as much transcends the powers of the one to solve as it surpasses the comprehension of the other, though armed with what he believes to be the "Word of God." Both of them are compelled to give it up as a mystery, as a riddle which they cannot read.

A very acute Christian writer, who looks upon the Bible as the "Word of God," says :—

Some persons are so evidently prosperous and happy in the tenor of their lives, that they afford no criterion ; others exhibit a doubtful mixture of happiness and suffering ; others, if judged by the distress that they manifest, bodily and mental, appear to suffer far more misery than could have ever been balanced by happiness, even in their brightest period,

and some appear in every respect so *very wretched*, that it is almost inconceivable that they ever could have enjoyed existence, even for a day. They have been diseased from birth, vicious from the first dawn of moral responsibility, in want perpetually, except as their crimes fed them. We cannot conceive that such miserable victims of disease, bad example, and total neglect, have in this life any compensating enjoyments. And yet they may cling tenaciously to existence, for this is no proof that they love existence; they may fear dying just as much as if they loved life, and may fear a future award too much to endure the approach of it. Thousands of squalid, diseased, utterly ignorant and vice-led children in large cities, have never known the natural feelings of children, nor of adults, nor of men; they have been perverted in body and mind; have stepped, as it were at once, from childhood to decrepitude, miserable caricatures of humanity. Can we hesitate a moment to conclude that multitudes of such persons have had a much larger proportion of pain?

Should it still be doubted, whether, even in the case we have cited, a union of squalid poverty and debasing vice, there may not be some compensating satisfactions (for degradation may be so great, as to be blind to itself), there will be no doubt, I think, of the preponderance of misery in other cases,—cretinism, leprosy, hereditary disease, which is loathsome and incurable, extreme deformity or mutilation, madness, with intervals of reason, lingering consumption, or other disorders, where certain death is foreseen for years, employments rapidly consuming health and life, yet imposed by circumstances, perpetual insufficiency of food ending in starvation. Will it be said these are physical evils? In part, they are; but the consequent misery rests in the mind; nor are they in any other degree self-inflicted, except as all sin heigh-

tens all suffering. Looking to this life only, I cannot solve these difficulties, when brought as arguments against the goodness of God. These are cases in which existence is a curse, if it terminates in this world, § and it is the natural right (the only natural right) of a creature not to be brought into an existence which, on the whole, is an unavoidable calamity.

It may seem as if the solution of this difficulty depends entirely on the free-will of man. But it does not: in such cases as I have alluded to, there might have been the most perfect free agency, but where were the means of making use of it? A child is born of wicked parents, associates only with the wicked, is taught wickedness only, has to get his living by it, hardly knows the very name of God, has no teacher, no example but in vice and crime; he may be a free agent, but his freedom will be invariably exerted in the wrong direction; he may have a conscience, but it is scarcely unlocked; therefore in such a case as this, it is nearly immaterial to the argument whether the individual be considered as a free or as a necessary agent. Now, how does this whole body of misery bear upon the moral character of the Creator of such wretched beings? Even granting them enough of knowledge and conscience to know they were acting wrongly, still there are no adequate means of reformation; and we cannot but ask, How could a good God (*foreseeing* such cases) create or rather lay such a physical plan as would necessarily evolve such existences? † We must not premise a future retribution, * a future counterpoise

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§ And does not extend into the past, might well have been added. C. S.

† It is no legitimate plea, that these individuals are comparatively few in number, positive injustice to one individual only would invalidate the arguments for the goodness of his Creator.

* The supposition of a future state cannot justify, on God's part, the perpetration of wrongs on any of His creatures. C. S.

of happiness; for this would be (as I said before) reasoning in a circle.

It is of no avail to reply, that these cases are the consequences of general laws, the clashing of laws that are, on the whole, benevolent: this answer limits the wisdom and power of the Creator in a way that no argument can justify. The reply may be, What power could force the Creator to ordain such a plan as would involve these exceptions? Will injustice to individuals be less injustice, because the great mass of mankind have more than justice? If general laws *will* thus cause partial injustice, then there is something in the laws which is independent of, nay, effectually oppugnant to, a good Creator,—yet, we cannot imagine what it can be,—certainly, not unorganized, inert, dead, senseless matter; for these are active and moral evils.—Why did not God prevent the existence of such beings, such a hopeless mass of moral evil? If such instances are the unavoidable consequences of the laws of nature, why did not an omnipotent and all-wise God give matter other and better laws? Unorganized matter could have no choice.

The Manichæan hypothesis (I repeat) would not solve the difficulty; for the Good Being, foreseeing how his works would be marred by the bad being, would not create what his opponent was sure to deface.‡ The partnership in creation implied in this hypothesis, between two entirely opposite principles, is perfectly absurd: no such co-agency could ever exist.

We conclude thus: We have the strong arguments for the goodness of God, arising from the

‡ Much less does the scriptural doctrine solve the difficulty; for Satan being represented as much inferior in relative power to the evil principle according to the Manichæan doctrine, could offer much less hindrance to the goodness and happines designed by the Supreme God, who is described as Omnipotent. And it is a moral axiom that what an Omnipotent Being permits, He does.

natural identity of perfect wisdom and perfect goodness, † from the absence of all motive to evil from the enormous preponderance and redundance of enjoyment in the animal kingdom, and of mental happiness in the rational world. We have seen, also, an account of the origin of evil; * which, if admitted, removes all idea that evil was imposed for its own sake, because it is inseparable from the system of gradation. ‡ But with all this,

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† Granted that God is perfectly wise and therefore perfectly good, that as a perfectly good Being he could possibly have no motive to evil, and granting further that there is "an enormous preponderance and redundance of enjoyment in the animal kingdom, and of mental happiness in the rational world," we still get no satisfactory solution of the mystery of "evil," whatever its amount in the world. Why should a perfectly wise and good and all-powerful God allow the least evil to exist in His kingdom? C. S.

* The author's own words will show how far this account is satisfactory :—

"Thus we have suggested two solutions to account for the cause of moral evil or sin consistently with the perfect goodness of God, neither of which is satisfactory. The first is, that it is the only means to discipline free agents in virtue and moral improvements, and true happiness, but as we must not premise that there is a state after death, the means appear inadequate to the end; there being much more evil than is in this life only counterbalanced by the good which it produces. The second cause assigned, though it traced the evil to its origin, a system of gradation and mixture of the animal and spiritual principle in our minds, yet afforded no satisfactory reason for the constitution of such a nature, or the adoption of the system of gradation."

‡ Why should any gradation exist in the creation? It involves injustice and is consequently unworthy of a just God. The author himself acknowledges the weakness of the "gradation theory" when he says :—"...And if these evils be the natural consequences of our grade, they are certainly traced to their origin; but then I submit that if any one should object to the goodness of this system (and consequently to that of its Author), on account of the evil it thus involves, we could make no reply but that there is probably some mysterious reason why the God who has shown such consummate skill in His works, has ordered a system of gradation."

there is an appearance, not only of justice denied, but of positive cruelty inflicted, although in a comparatively small number of instances.—All is thus far involved in perplexity. †

Dr. Vaughan in his work the "Age and Christianity" declares (page 83*) :—"No attempt of any philosopher § to harmonise our ideal notion as to the sort of world which it became a being of infinite perfection to create, with the world existing around us, can ever be pronounced successful. The facts of the moral

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* *See "Madras Thinker," May* 20, 1888.

§ The Dr., undoubtedly, means the European philosophers. The "enigma, (the existence of evil) which has all this time baffled the attempts of the European philosopher to solve, has been a plain fact to the Aryan philosopher ever since the creation of the world.

† Our writer tries to explain away the existence of moral evil by the supposition of a future state. He says :—"Premising, what I think there is no objection to suppose, that the Almighty has intended a state of perfect happiness for such beings as, by their voluntary exertions, seek it, instead of conferring happiness irrespective of all moral desert ; then we have a simple solution of the existence of moral evil, and, of course, for that two-fold state of mind which causes the moral struggle. There is surely nothing new or difficult in such a supposition. It is so natural, that we might rather doubt if he will allow any happiness to any rational creatures, without some such a trial. But a free agent cannot be forced into goodness—he cannot be virtuous, but by the voluntary choice of good in preference to evil ; and for this trial there must be evil, and much evil too." But why is not every man given the same opportunities to choose between good and bad ? How is it that some are placed in circumstances most favorable to the right formation and development of character, and some in company and surroundings, the atmosphere whereof is charged with all that is most vicious and detestable ? If God wanted to try us, why would not He give us all equal chance ? The existence of evil, thus, remains as inexplicable a mystery with christians as ever, and the character of God as a Moral Governor unvindicated.

Further on our writer attempts to solve the difficulty of the preponderance of human suffering in any case by the

and physical world seem to justify inferences of an opposite description from benevolent; to solve this enigma has been the great task of humanity from the birth-time of thought; many have promised the solution, in none has the promise been performed; some indeed have lived so long in the region of their own explanations and theories, as to be persuaded that they had given the true interpretation of the mystery, but mankind, having listened for a while to the supposed exposition, have shaken the head and with a sigh

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supposition of a future state. He observes:—"Will the reader pardon a little repetition? Even granting the free agency of man, I cannot doubt but there have been thousands of instances in which man's *involuntary* sufferings in this life have greatly exceeded his enjoyments, as was stated in the preceding objection to the goodness of God; such as cases of hereditary and incurable distempers, hereditary leprosy, cretinism, the hereditary consequences of lues, extreme imbecility of mind or body, melancholy madness; cases of misery produced by vice, bred, born and cherished almost without consciousness of crime, certainly with no means *adequate* to reformation; cases of abject poverty, of semi-starvation and over-work, undermining the constitution, and cases of man's tyranny; cases of violent bodily accidents, or mental distress, which overbalance any enjoyments that have fallen to the share of such individuals—and such, a preponderance of *involuntary* sufferings, have occurred, though not frequently. Now, it is a moral axiom, that a being has a claim not to be brought into a state of existence in which he involuntarily suffers more pain than pleasure. How, then, we argued, could God be perfectly good? Even granting the most enormous preponderance of animal and rational enjoyment in the world *collectively*, this would not prove the goodness or even the justice of God, so long as one individual involuntarily suffered in his whole existence more than he enjoyed; but we have every other evidence, *priori* and *posteriori*, that God is perfectly good. A future state alone solves this difficulty. Here, then, we have a second presumptive proof of another life; because that can alone afford a compensation for this preponderance of involuntary suffering. I do not mean that there is any *natural* evidence that these sufferers will be exalted to a place or state similar to the Christian heaven. Such sufferers as I describe are neither

have gone on their way, feeling that the old road was still burdened with all its old perplexities."

The Rev.* George Gilfillan, in his "Grand Discovery of the Fatherhood," is forced to admit that nature does not prove God to be an absolute moral Governor of the universe. He cites many facts in support of his position, and then observes:—"Is this a spot chosen by a father for the education of his children, or is it a den of banishment and torture for his foes; is it nursery, or is it a hell? There is no discovery of the father in man, in his science, philosophy, history, art or in any of his relations, but is found in scripture † alone.

The ‡ Rev. Hugh M'Neile, of St. Judes, Liverpool, (Eng.), declares:—"I am convinced that from external creation no right conclusion can be drawn concer-

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deserving of it nor fit for it; and have not the least natural reason to expect it: nature points to a future state for such persons, which is not materially differing from the present world; where they may undergo future trial or discipline, and may be finally awarded according to their deserts." This explanation, while it does not in the least account for the sufferings of man in this world, only shows that God is a very cruel and unjust Being. He first makes some people rot in misery and suffering in this world, places them in circumstances where wickedness and iniquity reign supreme, and then punishes them in the next world for what they could not possibly be held responsible. It is like tying a man's hands while giving him orders for work, and afterwards punishing him because he never did what he was told to do. Nay it is worse than that.

* *See "Madras Thinker," May* 20, 1888.

† That is merely an assertion and requires proof. The discovery of the Father in Moses, Lot, and other scriptural prophets, whose name is legion, is no discovery of the Father but of a being called Jehova. As regards Jesus, there have been men who, in point of moral perfection, have been by far his superiors and to whom Jesus, in point of intellectual depth, is a complete cypher.

‡ *See "Madras Thinker," May,* 1888.

ning the moral character of God. * Creation is too deeply and disastrously blotted in consequence of man's sin to admit of any satisfactory result from an adequate contemplation of nature. The authors of a multitude of books on this subject have given an adequate and partial induction of particulars. Already aware, (though, perhaps scarcely recognizing how or whence) that God is "love", they have looked on nature for proofs of this conclusion, and taken what suited their purpose; but they have not taken nature as a whole and collected a conclusion fairly from impartial premises. They expatiate on the blessings and enjoyments of life, in the countless tribes of earth, air and sea. But if life be a blessing, † death is a curse. Nature presents the universal triumph of death. Is this the doing of a God of love? Or are there two Gods—a kind one giving life, and an unkind one taking it away; and the wicked one invariably the victor? In external creation, exclusively and adequately contemplated, there is no escape from Manichæism. ‡ It is vain to say that the death of the inferior creatures is a blessing to man; for why in the creation of a God of love, should any

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* What has man's sin got to do with the inferior creatures? If the absurd theory of original sin be granted, how would the Christian account for the suffering and pain incident on inferior animal life? Did the first progenitors of the coutless inferior species sin like Adam? C. S.

† Life is merely the junction of the soul with the material body. The separation of the soul from the body is "death." The soul is eternal and imperishable. C. S.

‡ "The Manichæan theory, (I repeat), would not solve the difficulty; for the Good Being, foreseeing how his works would be marred by the bad being, would not create what his opponent was sure to deface. The partnership in creation implied in this hypothesis between entirely two opposite principles is perfectly absurd; no such co-agency could ever exist." See page 21.

such necessity exist, and how would this account for the death of man himself?"

To a believer in the Vedic Revelation, however, all is clear as day-light. He, too, like the Bishop, is perfectly convinced and intensely conscious of the fact that the Supreme Being is good, merciful and just. But to him, the existence of pain and suffering in the world is not only not incapable of a reasonable and satisfactory explanation, but is thoroughly consistent with the nature and character of a most beneficent and just Creator. The Vedic Revelation declares that the soul is eternal and imperishable, that its attributes or qualities are also eternal and imperishable, that it is perpetually transmigrating through physical bodies, attaining, at times, by implicity obeying the commands of the Maker, to the highest bliss it is capable of enjoying and securing, thereby, a temporary (compared with eternity) release from transmigration, while at others leading lives of happiness and misery, combined in proportions, in consonance with the dictates of justice and the degree of merit and demerit, in bodies of various descriptions. The soul, we are told in the Vedas, is an intelligent existence, free to do and free to choose ; it may utilize its opportunities to its highest advantage, or it may throw them away to the extreme detriment of its interests. If, when in the body of man, it uses its powers and faculties in a manner pleasing to its Lord and Master, *i. e.*, in accordance with the instructions which the Supreme Being has laid down in the Vedas for its well-being and happiness, it entitles itself to the enjoyment of that supreme bliss which a rigid carrying out of them carries with it, but if it uses them otherwise, it only estab-

lishes its right to misery and suffering, according to the measure of its iniquity ; it descends lower in the scale of beings and there expiates its wickedness and iniquity.

We read in the Revelation :—*Asuníte punarasmasu chakshu puna pranmihnodhehi bhogam; jyok pashyem súrymuchchar antamnumte maridyana swasti. Punarno asung prithvi dadatu punar dayaur deví punarantriksham. Punarna soma stanvang dadatu puna púsha pathyanaya swasti.* These translated mean:—(*Asunite*) O Lord, the sustainer of life (*puna asmasuchakshu*) give us again (*i.e.* in our next birth) sound eyes, and give us (*puna pran*) again *pran i. e.*, life, energy, vitality and so on, and (give us) (*bhogam*) things worth enjoying. May we, O Lord, (*pashyem súryamuchcharantang*) have life and light, (*anumate*) O Lord, (*marid*) make (*na*) us happy and (*swasti*) prosperous, (*puna*) again may the (*prithvi*) earth and (*dayaurdevi*) the brilliant sun and (*antriksha*) space, (*Dadatu na*) give us (*asung*) all that produces energy, life and vitality. (*Puna*) Again (in the next birth) may the (*soma*) herbs (*dadatu*) give us (*tanvang*) healthy and vigorous constitutions; (*puna*) again may (*pursha*) the Lord, the Sustainer of life, (*pathyan*) teach us the ways of righteousness, which bring (*swasti*) happiness. *Rigveda, Ashtak* 8, *adhya* 1, *varg* 23, *mantra* 6.

Again:—*Punarmana punarayurm agan punaprana punaratmam agan punash chakshu puna shrotram agan. Vaishvanro adbdhastnupa agnirna patu duritadvadyat. Yajur Veda, Adhya* 4, *Mantra* 15,

(2) *Punarmait vindaryang punaratma darivnang brahmanancha. Punaragnyo dhishaya yathasttham kalapantamihaiva. Atharva, kand 9, Anú 6, varg 69, mantra 1.*

(3) *Ayo dharmani prathma sasad tato bapúnshi krinushe purúni. Dhasyuryoni prathma aviveshayo vachamnuditang chiket. Atharva, kand 5 Anu 1, Verga* 1, *Mantra,* 2.

These translated mean :—(*agan*) may we get, (*puna*) again (in our next birth),. (*man*) mind, (*ayu*) long life; (*agan*) may we get (*pran*) *i.e.*, life,energy, vitality, etc., and (*punaratma*) pure wisdom ; (*agan*) may we get, (*punar chakshu*) eyes, and (*puna shrotram*) ears.

(*Vaishvanro*) may the Lord, the leader of all, (*adbdha*) the pure, (*tanupa*) the dispenser of health, (*Agni*) the omniscient Lord, (*patu*) keep us, (*avdhyat durtat*) from bad deeds. (*Fanarvaitvindaryang*) may we in our next birth have sound organs, (*punai atma*), mind, energy, etc, and (*drivnang*) wealth (material and intellectual), and (*brahmanang*) true Revelation ; (*Punaragniya*) may we again perform *yajnya* and may we (*dhishaya,*) be as wise in our next birth as we have been in the (*prathma*) previous ones.

(*Ayo*) the soul (*sasad*) which has been doing, (*aharmani*), good work (*prathma*) in the previous births, gets by reason thereof, (*puruni bapunshi*) bodies of superior kind.

(*Dhasya*) the enjoyerof punishments and rewards *viz.*, the soul, (*yoni avivesh*) enters the womb (*prathma*) according to its former actions, and he who (*chiket*) acts according to (*anuditang*) the

Revealed (*vachya*) Word, obtains bodies of superior kind.

Again :—the *47th mantra of Yajurveda, Adhya 19,* runs as follows :—*Davo sriti ashrinvang pitrinamhang devanamut martayanam. Tabhiyamidang visharmejtasmeti yadantra pitrang matrancha.* It means :—(*ahang ashrinvang*) we have heard (*davo*) of two (*sriti*) ways, one of (*pitrinang*) those versed in divine knowledge and (*devaang*) of men of profound learning, and the other of (*martaynang*) ordinary mortals, and lower animals; (*idang vishvang*), all creatures (*tabhyany*) by means of their (birth), (*asmeti*) enjoy the fruits of their actions, and (*antra pitrang matrincha*) are born of various parents.

The author of the *Nirukta* says the same in the most clear terms :—*Marishchahang punarjato jatshchahang punarmarita. Nana yoni sahasrani mayoshitani yanivai. Ahara vividha bhukta pita nana vidhastna. Matro vivdha darishta pitra suhridasttha. Avang mukha pidhaymano jantushchaiv samanvita.* It means:—(*ahang marita*) I have died, (*punarjata*) been born again, (*jata ahang*) I have been born, (*puna marita*) and again died, (*mayas*) by me, (*ushtang*) have been occupied, (*sahastani*) countless, (*yoni*) wombs of, (*nana*) multifarious kinds. (*Bhugta*) I have enjoyed, (*vivdha*) various kinds of, (*ahar*) food, (*pita*) sucked, (*nana vidha*) many, (*stana*) breasts. (*Adrishen*) I have seen, (*vivdhamatro*) many mothers, (*pitra*) fathers and (*suhridha*) friends. (*Pidhaymano*) in great pain, (*avangmukha*) with my head turned downwards, (*jantushaiv*) I have lived, (*samanvita*) as an embryo.

The foregoing quotations explain away, to the entire satisfaction of all men of well-constituted minds, the so-called mystery of the existence of pain and suffering in the world. Happiness and misery, joy and suffering, are merely the rewards of the doings of the soul, and a just Supreme Being is the Dispenser of these rewards. If the lion and the tiger catch and tear their prey into pieces, causing indescribable pain and suffering to their inoffensive victims, do we not meet with parallels of this barbarity and cruelty among animals of a higher order? Do we not find the wise and intelligent man, who looks down upon the inferior ranks of beings with contempt, as being so far below him in point of intelligence and sense, slaughtering and devouring the helpless, the harmless cow, the goat, and a thousand other animals of the inoffensive order? Do we not find him putting to the most exquisite tortures beasts which are not only not inoffensive but most useful to him, since they supply him with many choice articles of food, without which he would not half so much relish his meals as he does now? Is all this barbarity and cruelty to go unpunished? Is a *just* God to overlook such sanguinary and inhuman deeds? Can His inexorable justice ever allow the perpetrator of such barbarities to get off unpunished? No; he must be meted out his due reward, he must bear all the pain and suffering he has caused to others, and must, if a just Supreme Being in His infinite wisdom thinks fit, descend into lower bodies to be rent and torn as he rent and tore others, or be born a man to rot in misery and wretchedness all his days.

Virtue, prosperity, health and the happiness, which they bring; as well as vice, poverty, disease. and the misery which they produce, are indeed God's dispensation but God's dispensation not out of a cruel whim, but in keeping with the requirements of justice and indirectly with those of mercy. The Creator only gives every one his due. Whoever walks in the ways of righteousness, gets the reward of the righteous; whoever breaks the commands of his Maker, provides for himself only a harvest of thorns. It is meet that every soul should have what it deserves, for this impartial administration of justice promotes and encourages virtue and represses iniquity and vice—a fact which we find abundantly illustrated in the governments of those earthly kings who never swerve from the line of justice. The diversity of condition among mankind, or, which is one and the same thing, the existence of happiness and misery in the world, is thus perfectly consistent with the nature of a most merciful and just God and is not at all incompatible with it as the Christians think it to be.

The Bishop, it may be remarked to his credit, is one of the few Christians who are above the ordinary run of men of their persuasion. It is really an agreeable surprise to come across a Christian and a sincere Christian, who can make up his mind to differ from his co-religionists. A believer in the faith of Christ will seldom be found to have so far triumphed over the spirit of his earlier teachings as to acknowledge that there is a difference in the condition of man and man. It is always fiercely contended that all are equal in point of happiness and

misery. A poor man is as well off without riches as a man of his worth with them. Men are not to be judged by appearances; the wretched, the blind, the poverty-stricken, the disease-consumed, are in the enjoyment of as much comfort and felicity asthose whoare hale and hearty, who are sound of limb, who have a competence to depend upon. The Indian missionary, in particular, will strenuously maintain that any man is as pleasantly circumstanced as any other, that there is nothing which one possesses for which the other has not been compensated in some manner or other. The reason why the Indian missionaries lay such stress on their theory of "equality of happiness," a theory which is against all experience, as any impartial observer of facts will testify, is that the admission that happiness and misery are unequally proportioned among different men, places them in a very embarrassing predicament. They cannot, then, as indignantly run down the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, as is their wont, under pain of accusing God of injustice. The doctrine of the transmigration of souls is one which they dislike with their whole heart, and they always find it safer to take their ground upon the serviceable theory of equality of happiness. They do, indeed, sometimes talk of some "hereafter world" which they look upon as a place of punishments and rewards, but that belief ushers them into a world of difficulties, being too ricketty to bear the weight of argument, and they seldom lay much stress on it. The Bishop, however, finds happiness and misery very unevenly distributed among mankind. He cannot shut his eyes to stubborn facts. He finds that many children, without

any fault of theirs, "are born of vicious parents reared in vice, brought up in dens of iniquity, removed from all good influences, taught to regard sin as their means of livelihood, and so carrying out a wretched existence in sin, poverty, and disease, till death comes as a relief; whilst others abound with good things and have every opportunity of instruction, of practising virtue and of improving their faculties both of mind and body"; and, while frankly admitting these facts, he is unable to reconcile them with the character of an all-wise and beneficent Creator. No wonder he cannot, for Christianity is silent on the subject. But the Vedic Revelation teaches, and its teaching appeals to our reason and our sense of justice for its truth, that wretchedness, disease, poverty and all their concomitant evils, as well as happiness, health, affluence and all the blessings attendant upon them, are the soul's own making and are the manifestations of the ever-active justice of the Supreme Being.

We need not here say anything at length upon the doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The quotations we have given above from Revelation should dispel all doubts on the subject, but even considered on its own merits, on purely intellectual grounds, we find an overwhelming mass of evidence in its favor. The eternity of the soul, the unequal distribution of happiness in the world, the dread inspired by death in all sentient creatures, the conjunction of the soul with the physical body at present, the difference in the powers and faculties of men, difference in their tendencies and inclinations, which must run in particular channels in spite of all efforts to change

their direction, and many other things are more than enough to place the truth of the doctrine above question. The evidence of inanimate nature—the perpetual death and regeneration of the seed, as well as the evidence of animate nature—the rise and fall, the growth and decay of nations, the growth followed by decay and that again by new growth, is also very strong on this point.

The learned Bishop, after acknowledging that the existence of "evil" cannot be explained away in the government of an all-wise and beneficent Creator, not only by believers in Christianity, but even by those who would reject Christianity and be guided by their *common sense* in religion, advises all men to act the Job when any phenomenon above their powers to account for falls under their observation, whether it be in the physical or in the moral order. He then proceeds as follows :—

"It follows that no man, who believes in God, and fairly looks at things as they are, can logically reject religious teaching on the sole ground that it includes mysteries ; on the contrary, his observation of Nature, so full of mysteries, will predispose him rather to expect to meet with them even in a revealed religion."

"Mystery," according to the Christian conception of the term, may not only be something which transcends the power of the human mind to understand, but it may be something which violates the very fundamental laws of our nature, which goes against all experience, which is opposed to the actual conditions of the world. It is possible that "Revelation" may contain things which ordinary

mortals cannot understand, but as long as a belief in these things does not clash with the fundamental laws of the human mind, as long as they do not go against our experience, they may be accepted, nay they ought to be accepted; for, though beyond the comprehension of ordinary minds, they may be quite clear to people more advanced in divine knowledge. The existence of "mysteries" of this kind in a Revelation, *i.e.*, the existence of mysteries which do not go against the fundamental laws of our nature, does not show that Revelation to be defective or untrue, nor does it give a man any right to discard it; on the contrary, he is bound to look upon it as a Revelation of God's will, and obey and act up to it. But when a book, pretending to be revealed, teaches and inculcates dogmas which go against the fundamental laws of our nature, which do not tally with our experience, being opposed to the actual conditions of the world, we cannot possibly consider it as a *revelation of God's will*, nor can we call those dogmas "mysteries," in the unchristian sense; for being opposed to the very fundamental laws of human nature, they are as incapable of being turned into something like "sense" by the ordinary minds, as they are by the most gifted intellects. For instance, no sensible man can ever look upon a book as the "Word of God" which tells him that a table so many yards long, so many feet high, can fit or was made to fit at a definite period in the History of mankind in an inkpot scarcely bigger in proportions than a pomegranate, or that, which is equally absurd, a few loaves and fishes multiplied and multiplied under the in-

fluence of the miraculous powers of a certain person till they were sufficient to feed a vast number of hungry people to repletion and to leave behind a surplus of many basketfuls of loaves in the bargain ; which teaches that one plus one plus one is one, thus violating the very fundamental rules of arithmetic; which teaches that God is one, unborn and incorporeal, but which contradicts its own words in another place by saying that God became corporeal, that He assumed human form, or that He begot a son which is the same with God the father, as also with another strange being called the "holy ghost." Such a revelation, abounding in contradictions and self-inconsistencies, containing doctrines and dogmas which tell us to believe things which, by the very nature of our constitution, we cannot believe, which tell us to throw away our experience, because it revolts against a certain point of belief, which tell us to discard the voice of reason and spurn at the dictates of conscience, merely because a certain article of faith requires this,—such a revelation is unworthy of the belief of sensible and intelligent people, and no man, who can think for himself, will ever find it in his heart and conscience to accept it simply because some of its advocates set its unreasonable dogmas down as "mysteries."

A true Revelation can never contain "mysteries" in the Christian sense of the word. Being designed for the welfare of man, it must be capable of being understood by him. It makes no difference if it is not understood by *all* men equally well, for different degrees of knowledge, different degrees of expansion and development of the moral

and intellectual faculties, must produce a difference in the understanding and realization of its truths by different men. Its truths would be clear in proportion to the extent of one's knowledge and spiritual insight, and thus what may be mysterious to some (not in the Christian sense, of course) may be perfectly clear to others. Nor does nature contain any mysteries in the Christian sense of the word. The existence of pain and suffering in the animal creation, which so perplexes the non-believers in the Vedic Revelation, is clear to the believers in the Vedic Revelation. The latter know that pain and suffering are the inevitable conditions of sentient existence, for the soul, being a free agent, can utilize the machinery of the body, placed at its disposal, in any way it likes, and since it does not always utilize it to good and righteous purposes, but mostly makes a bad use of it,—to its own detriment and to the injury of others,—it must atone for its errors and bad deeds by being subjected to pain and suffering in various ways, according as a *just* Supreme Being thinks fit in His infinite wisdom. Coming to the inanimate creation, we find that it is governed on fixed and immutable laws, that its operations are conducted on unvarying and unchangeable principles. There could not possibly be any thing done capriciously here. There could be no inconsistencies, no self-contradictions in its modes of working. Every seeming irregularity must admit of being explained away by law. The expression, therefore, that "nature is full of mysteries," has a meaning only when it means that there are some things in nature which are very difficult to understand, but it has no meaning if

it means that there are some things in nature which are *absolutely* above comprehension, or which clash with the fundamental laws of human nature, or which, to put it briefly, are above law and against law. Everything in nature must admit of being explained away by reflection, observation and experience. This view must be shared in by every believer in the true Revelation, for, Revelation—the embodiment of Divine knowledge—must fully explain nature, the work of the Divine architect. It is plain, therefore, that no revelation is really a Revelation and ought to be accepted as such by anybody, if it clashes with the fundamental laws of our nature, nor should the Bible be accepted as a true Revelation if it does.

We now come to the most valuable portion of the Bishop's remarks :—

"There is another practical reflection which common sense would not be unlikely to suggest. If God has made man, if He takes an interest in His creature, if He has endowed him with a conscience which tells him he ought to serve God, and if men have now existed on this earth many thousands of years, *it does not seem probable that the work of forming a religion to teach men how they have to serve God should have to be undertaken by some private individual at the present day. It seems far more probable that in creating him God must have made provision of some kind for this great need of man. Reason seems to say that true religion in some shape there must have been from the BEGINNING and that a true religion must exist at the present day. It cannot be that it has still to be invented.*" (The italics are ours.)

A true religion, as the Bishop rightly remarks, must exist at the present day, and it must date from the very beginning of creation. Without a Revelation in the beginning of creation, man could not have advanced a step from his primitive state of savagery, he could never have made any progress towards civilization, he could never have made any advance in science and arts as he has done. He would have lived and died an absolute savage till the end of the world. That this would have been the inevitable result in the absence of a Revelation from God as soon as man appeared on earth would be plain on a little reflection. Man can make no progress in any way without being taught. It is by association, company, contact, training and education that he learns anything. If a child, as soon as born, were taken away and shut up into a secluded spot where nobody except a couple of dumb nurses were allowed to have access, the child would grow up to be a perfect savage, scarcely superior to a brute in any respect. He would not even know how to speak, and, if nobody spoke to him and taught him anything after he was grown up, he would remain a savage all his life and would die unreclaimed from savagery. The same would be the result if a number of children, instead of one child, were brought up in the same way. They would never know who and what they were, how they stood in relation to objects and things which surrounded them, what duties they owed to their fellow-beings and what duties they owed to their God, however long they might live. Nor would one dumb child derive any good from his fellow-

dumb children, except that it would develop greater partiality for their company than for that of strangers.

Even granting that it is possible, though there is every reason to doubt the possibility, that some sort of articulate language may grow up in a community of people thus brought up and then placed in some out-of-the-way place, remote from the haunts of civilized people, there is no question that the savage horde will stick where it is. It will remain a community of unreclaimed savages as long as it does not come in contact with civilized people who can teach it their ways and manners, their arts and manufactures, their religion and morality, and all other accompaniments and achievements of civilization. The example of the Bhils, of the Tasmanians before they became what they are through the efforts of Christians, as well as that of the inhabitants of many of the American islands, shows that no savage people can work itself out of its state of savagery till it receives civilizing influences from without,—from a community which is already civilized. It shows that the primitive man may pass through untold centuries and countless ages a perfect savage, if the hand of civilization does not touch him. It shows that there is no progressing from the savage to the civilized man without the help of a civilizing agency. Our Bhils and Gonds have continued as they are for ages and ages; the Tasmanians were cannibals when they were first discovered by Europeans, and they had led the life of the cannibal for how many ages and centuries, no one knows. There are some parts of Africa which are inhabited by the primitive

man, who, in spite of all his antiquity, in spite of the thousands and millions of years which have rolled away since his first progenitors appeared in the place where he is, is as good a savage as any of his ancestors, and knows no more than what has descended to him from those who have gone before him. The European nations themselves were helped out of their state of savagery by other civilized nations. The northern nations of Europe were set on the way to civilization by their contact with the Romans, the Romans derived their civilization from the Greeks and the latter again from *Arya Varta.* There is no reason to suppose that the northern Europeon nations would have made any advance towards civilization had not the Romans taught them the ways of civilization. The grand civilization of ancient Egypt was not of its own achieving, but was derived from the sages and great teachers of India. India got its grand civilization, its unparallelled intellectual and moral elevation, from that fountain-head of knowledge, the Vedas, revealed to four *Rishis*—Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angra. No careful student of History can fail to trace the civilization of the entire mankind to the land of the Aryas, to its Rishis and Munis, who were instructed in the Revelation by the Supreme Being Himself. A Revelation, thus, is absolutely needed for the progress and advancement of mankind in the beginning of creation. Without a Revelation no progress is possible, without it man cannot advance beyond his primitive state of a savage. He cannot even secure to himself the first essentials of any thing like a civilized life, nor can he know who and what he is, whether there is a

Creator, and, if there is one, how to serve and obey Him. Just as it is impossible for a man now to be wise and learned without being taught and educated, in the same manner it would have been impossible for mankind to have become civilized without a Revelation from God in the beginning of creation. How vain are the efforts even of the civilized nations of to-day, nations which make so much of their civilization, to know and to understand God properly. To expect the primitive man, who has no one to come and civilize him, to understand and obey God properly without His own assistance, is simply the height of absurdity.

There are some people who say that no revelation is necessary in the beginning of creation, that man can work himself out of his savagery by his own efforts. This is the position generally taken by atheists and non-believers in Revelation. Their theory, however, has not even a semblance of an argument in its favor. It is against all experience and observation. But they would have their own way in spite of the hopelessness of their case. It is impossible for man, howsoever civilized, to understand, without the light of Revelation, the problem of existence, to understand the nature of the soul and to understand the ties which bind him to the Supreme Soul; it is impossible, we repeat, for him to read nature aright, to explain away the existence of "evil" in the world. This requires no illustration; the modern civilization is an illustration of it. There is, then, an absolute necessity of a Revelation in the beginning of creation, for, the justice and the mercy of

the Supreme Being demand, that it shall be made in the beginning of creation, so that all and every *one* of His creatures may enjoy its blessings.

Not only is it necessary that a true Revelation should exist from the beginning of creation, for progress of every kind, from extreme savagery to the highest civilization, depends upon it, but it should be characterized as follows :—

(1) It should be perfect in itself, free from all error, and incapable of any amendment or of becoming obsolete in part or in whole.

(2) It should not speak of personalities, but of species as a whole, and should deal with general principles and general laws.

(3) The truths revealed and the doctrines taught therein should not be opposed to each other.

(4) These truths and doctrines should not be opposed to the law of the material world, nor to the fundamental laws of the human mind.

Now, the Biblical religion is a religion which not only does not date from the beginning of creation, but does not possess even one of the essentials enumerated above. The Bible abounds in contradictions and inconsistencies, and is replete with errors. It deals with particular persons and things, and speaks of particular places and localities. Its doctrines are opposed both to the laws of the material world and to the fundamental laws of the human mind. That it is almost entirely made up of descriptions and accounts of particular persons must be admitted by every body who cares to read it, but that there are contradictions and discrepancies in it is not unoften indignantly denied by some of its warmest

admirers. But in denying this they deny facts. To quote from one of its most devoted followers :—

"The next phenomenon, which strikes the honest student of Scripture, is, that there are *contradictions* there,—statements, some of which cannot possibly be reconciled with each other, and many more which, though said to be reconciled, yet remain to the natural eye of common sense, unresolved discrepancies. They may be concerned with comparatively trifling subjects : but still, contradictions they are. For instance—Numbers iii. 39. mentions the whole number of Levites as 22,000 ; while the distinct enumeration of the three Levitical families in the same chapter gives a different computation. 2 Chron. xvi. 1. relates that in 'The six-and-thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha, King of Israel, came up against Judah.' But in 1 King xv. 33. it appears that Baasha had died in the twenty-seventh year of Asa's reign. Again, 2. Chron. xxxii. 2. makes Ahaziah forty-two years old when his father dies ; but xxxi. 20. relates that the father himself was but forty years old when he died. Lastly, 2. Chron. xxiv. 14. relates that 'spoons and vessels of gold and silver,' were made of the surplus money collected by Johoiada ; while 2 Kings xxi, states distinctly, 'There were not made . . . . any vessels of gold or of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the Lord.' These specimens, taken from the *Old Testament alone*, will suffice. They.........are facts which, however small, are enough to prove that *inspiration*, whatever else it means, does not mean a divine guarantee of an infallibly consistent statement of numbers and events."

Further on, the same writer says :—

"The farther question immediately suggests itself—'Are there, as a fact, any passages in the Bible which are at variance with the known truths

of science?" For, to use the words of Dean Goodwin, 'Divine inspiration may imply an absence of errors upon physical questions, or it may not: who shall venture to say *a priori*, whether it does or no.' '. . . . Why not endeavour, by looking at the evidence, to see on which side the truth lies? And if it should appear, upon examination, that any chapter contains statements not in accordance with science, then, instead of coming to the conclusion that the Scriptures are not inspired, I should rather come to this, *viz.*, that the idea *of inspiration does not involve that accuracy concerning physics which many persons have imagined that it does.*' By way of specimen, it may suffice to adduce the *insuperable difficulties* that all *non-theological geologists* have found in the idea of a universal deluge: and to refer the reader to two remarkable letters from the professor of geology and the 'Redcliffe observer' at Oxford which were appended to the "Replies to Essays and Reviews" Mr. Main there absolutely scouts the idea of creation in six days; and Professor Phillips prudently confesses, 'We do not seek our geology in the Bible.' We are brought then to this further result, that *inspiration*, whatever else it means, does not mean *infallible scientific* accuracy,

It seems unnecessary to quote here any thing in support of our position from the writings of unitarians and free-thinkers who have written exhaustively on the teachings and doctrines of the Bible. The foregoing quotations are sufficient to show that even the most zealous defenders of the Bible cannot conscientiously maintain that its teachings are not self-contradictory or that they are in harmony with the truths of science.

The position of the Qoran is much the same as that of the Bible, and its pretensions to be a

revelation of God's will must, of course, be rated at their proper worth. The Vedic Revelation alone fulfils the conditions of a true Revelation. It dates from the beginning of creation, its teachings are in accordance with the laws of nature, it is free from error, no self-contradictions are to be found in it, and it is incapable of an amendment or of becoming obsolete, either in part or in whole. Being the embodiment of the Divine knowledge, the Vedas are eternal and imperishable. Let him, who cares for truth, study them and realize their Divine origin for himself. Every *mantra* is full of such grand and sublime truths that there is no mistaking its right source.

That the Vedas exist from the beginning of creation is fully evident from their doctrines. Nay, as far as doctrines go, they are eternal, for they speak of eternal principles, of eternal truths. But, though eternal, they are communicated to man in the beginning of every creation. That they have been with man ever since the present world began, is clear from the Aryan *Jotish shastras* and almanacs. The Aryans have from the very beginning of creation been noting down the progress of time with the utmost exactness. They have been adding to the past and subtracting from the future every single minute that has passed away. They have never missed their reckoning for a single day even during the darkest periods of their History. The bloodiest revolutions have not been able to wean them from their numerical occupations, the direst catastrophes have not disturbed their computations. Through every vicissitude of fortune they have passed unaffected ; the storms of the dead-

liest persecutions have failed to interfere with their duty, as the most pleasant sunshine of peace and harmony has failed to make them unmindful of it. During the days of the Jain domination, as in the earlier periods of the Mahomedan supremacy, when the ruling powers of the time made it their business to consign to flames or to the waters every Aryan book they could lay hold of, the Aryans incorporated their reckoning into a *sankalpa,* which was to be repeated by them regularly every day on the occasion of the performance of *Havan* and other similar rites. That *sankalpa* is as follows:—*Om tatsat shri brahmane dwitye prahrardhe vaivasavte manvantare ashtavin shatitame kaliyuge kali prathma chaane Aryavartatantraika deshe amuka nagre amuka samvatsarayanarttu masa paksha dina nakshattra muhurte attredam karyam kritam kriyate va.* It means:—*Adoration to the Lord, the fountain-head of truth. Such and such a ceremony is performed in 2nd half of the 2nd quarter of the Brahmadina, in the 28th chaukri of Vaivasvat Manvantar, in the first quarter of Kaliyuga, in such a town, situated in such a province of Aryavarta, in such a year, in such a month, in such a fortnight, on such a day, in such a constellation, under such a conjunction of such stars, at such an hour.* The *sankalpa* plainly tells how many years the present creation has already enjoyed and how many years it is as yet to enjoy. Every Aryan, worth the name, knows or should know that the period of time a world lasts is called Brahmadin, and the period of time, equal to the Brahmadin in duration, which it remains in a state of chaos is called Brahmarat. He knows further

that a Brahmadin, as a Brahmarat, is divided into fourteen *Manvantars*, each *Manvantar* being subdivided into 71 Chaukris, each of which in its turn is divided into four *Yugas, i. e., Satyayuga, Treta, Dvapar*, and *Kaliyuga*. Now, the *Satyayuga* =17,28,000 years, the *Treta*=12,96,000, the *Dvapar*=8,64,000, and the *Kaliyuga*=4,32,000. These all four added together make 43,20,000 years, —the period of time comprehended in one Chaukri, which is also called a Chataryugi. A *Manvantar*, therefore, equals 71 × 43,20,000=30,67,20,000, and fourteen times of this figure, which is equal to 4,23,40,80,000 years, is the age of the present world. The world is now going on the 2nd half of the 2nd quarter of the present Brahma day. Six *Manvantars, i.e., Swambhare, Savarochdha, Autmi, Tamas, Raivat* and *Chakshush*, have already passed away, and the 7th, the present *Vaivasvata*, is in the course of passing. It has already seen fully 27 Chaukris and the first three full *Yugas* of the 28th Chaukri and 4984 years of the fourth Yuga. The world has thus been existing for 30,67,20,000 × 6=1,84,03,20,000+43,20,000 × 27 + 17,28,000 +12,96,000 + 8,64,000 + 4,987 = 1,96,08,52,989 years. The age which it is as yet to enjoy is 2,33,32,27,011 years.

Men of Christian persuasion and people with a Christian turn of mind will find it rather hard to believe that the world is so old, or that the Vedas have been in existence so long. The antiquity assigned to the world and the Vedas by the Aryans is well calculated to strike such people dumb with amazement. It is so immense as to transcend their wildest dreams. The figures exceed the Biblical chronology of the

world, and hence that of the Christian Revelation, by one thousand millions and over 96 crores of years. To them they appear more like the creations of the imagination than anything like a reality. And well they might; the monstrous date is so strangely unlike anything they have been taught to believe from their earliest days. But whatever repugnance might orthodox Christianity feel in contemplating such vast antiquity, it cannot shake the evidence upon which it is based. It is a historical fact. The facts of History cannot be safely ignored. All Aryan books, whether devoted to any special branch of science, such as *Surya Sidhhant*, or treating of subjects in general as *Manusimriti*, are perfectly unanimous on the subject of chronology. To doubt the chronology, therefore, is not only perfectly unjust and unfair, but is fatal to the cause of History itself.

That the world is as old as we maintain it is, is in perfect accord with the investigations of modern Science. The researches of Geology, as far as they have gone, afford a mass of presumptive evidence, amounting to a positive proof, in support of our chronology, which goes very near proving our position. Geology, it should be remembered, is as yet in its infancy, and its conclusions, therefore, as it itself declares, cannot be taken as final. Its verdict will gain in certainty and in approximation to the actual truth in proportion it dives deeper and deeper into its researches, and it will be considered final only when the Science has attained to the highest stage of development. But as far as the findings of the Science at present go, they show what value our chronology has. Man, according to its discoveries,

has been existing on the earth for at least millions of years. Remains of him have been found embedded in the sands of the Mississippi confirming this fact. It is no way inconsistent with the geologist's past experiences or with the mass of materials which yet await his investigations, that he may have to go millions and millions of years back into the past to fix the true age of the world.

While orthodox Christianity is looking daggers at Science, which is fearlessly exposing its weak points, the believers in the Vedic Revelation watch its progress with every mark of satisfaction, for it only tends to strengthen and to prove what they maintain or contend for. It is highly interesting to mark the confusion of a Christian when asked to reconcile Biblical antiquity of creation with the revelations of Science. The world, according to the Bible, is only six thousand years old, while Science would have it that it has been existing for millions of years. How can a discrepancy like this be accounted for?

Though Christians of the old type still believe in the Biblical chronology of creation, those of the more liberal sort have come to perceive the futility of braving Science. Of the latter class there are many men of learning and erudition, who confess in the plainest language that Bible has nothing to do with Science, that it matters not if it is wrong on points of Science, while the majority of them are set hard at work to manufacture a new interpretation of the Bible. Hidden meanings are being discovered in each verse, and every statement, which, taken in its plain and natural

sense, would provoke a smile on a Scientist's lips, is being shown to breathe nothing but Geology, Chemistry, Physics, and other kinds of Sciences.

We shall conclude our remarks by quoting a Vedic *mantra* which shows that the Vedas are given to mankind in the beginning of every creation. The *mantra* runs as follows:—*Saparyagá chchhukra makáyamabrana masnáviran shuddhamapápaviddhama kavir manishi paribhú svayambhú yatha tathtyatorthán vyadáchcháshvatibhyah samábhyah.* It means:—(*saparyagát*), He who pervades everything, (*Shukram*) who is the creator of the universe, (*Akáyam*) who is incorporeal, (*Abranam*) who is indivisible, (*Asnáviran*) who is free from the bonds of nerves and muscles, (*shuddham*) who is pure, (*Apápaviddham*) who is sinless, (*kavi*) who is omniscient, (*manishi*) who is privy to our inmost thoughts, (*paribhú*) who presides over all, (*svayambhú*) who is Self-Existent,—such a Lord (*vyadadhát*) gives (*sháshvatibhyah samábhyah*) in the beginning of creation, to his eternal subjects, (*tathyatorthán*) the knowledge of the Vedas.

Om. tat sat brahmane nama.